

IN THE CLAIMS:

The text of all pending claims, (including withdrawn claims) is set forth below. Cancelled and not entered claims are indicated with claim number and status only. The claims as listed below show added text with underlining and deleted text with ~~strikethrough~~. The status of each claim is indicated with one of (original), (currently amended), (cancelled), (withdrawn), (new), (previously presented), or (not entered).

Please AMEND claims 2-9, 20, and 25-26, CANCEL claims 1, 10-19, and 22-24, and ADD new claims 28-29 in accordance with the following:

1. (Cancelled)

2. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 46, further comprising means for releasing the call after playing the user message.

3. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 46, further comprising means for displaying caller identification information to the user.

4. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 46, wherein the receiving means includes means for activating a user command interface for a predetermined period of time following commencement of the user alert.

5. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 46, wherein the receiving means includes a voice recognition unit for recognizing at least one spoken command.

6. (Currently Amended) A system for responding to an incoming phone call from a calling party, comprising:

means for receiving the incoming phone call;

means for generating a user alert in response to the incoming phone call, said generating means including a ring signal detection means;

means at a called party's telephone for enabling selective entry of a user message in response to the alert while the incoming call is pending and still ringing to the calling party; and

means for playing the user message to the calling party, said playing means including means for transmitting said user message from the called party telephone to the calling party telephone via the telephone network; and

a timing means responsive to the ring signal detection means for timing a predetermined period during which a called party can select to generate the user message;

wherein the selective entry means includes means for selecting between recording one or more parameters insertable in a customized pre-recorded message and recording a message without parameters while the incoming call is pending;

wherein the receiving means includes a voice recognition unit for recognizing at least one spoken command;

wherein the at least one spoken command includes a predetermined instruction and a variable parameter.

7. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 46, wherein the receiving means includes means for manually selecting the user message.

8. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 46, wherein the means for receiving includes means for recording an audio user message.

9. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 46, wherein the means for receiving includes means for storing the user message.

10-19. (Cancelled)

20. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 46, wherein the system is incorporated within a telephone.

21-24. (Cancelled)

25. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 46, wherein said means for playing the user message to the calling party is configured to cause playing the user message to the calling party in some instances in which the user refuses to answer the incoming phone call.

26. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 46, wherein the means for generating a user alert in response to the incoming phone call comprises means for detecting the incoming phone call based on the incoming phone call.

27. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 26, wherein the means for detecting the incoming phone call comprises means for detecting a ring signal of the incoming telephone call.

28. (New) A telephony device, comprising:

means for receiving an incoming phone call from a calling party via a telephone network;

means for generating a user alert in response to the incoming phone call, said

generating means including a ring signal detection means;

means for enabling selective entry of a user message in response to the alert while the incoming call is pending and still ringing to the calling party;

means for playing the user message to the calling party, said playing means including means for transmitting said user message from the telephony device to a telephony device of the calling party via the telephone network; and

timing means responsive to the ring signal detection means for timing a predetermined period during which a user of the telephony device can select to generate the user message,

wherein the selective entry means includes means for selecting between recording one or more parameters insertable in a customized pre-recorded message and recording a message without parameters while the incoming call is pending,

wherein the receiving means includes a voice recognition unit for recognizing at least one spoken command, and

wherein the at least one spoken command includes a predetermined instruction and a variable parameter.

29. (New) A method, comprising:

receiving an incoming phone call from a calling party at a telephony device of a called party via a telephone network;

generating a user alert in response to the incoming phone call;

enabling selective entry of a user message in response to the alert while the incoming call is pending and still ringing to the calling party;

playing the user message to the calling party and transmitting said user message from the telephony device to a telephony device of the calling party via the telephone network; and

timing a predetermined period during which a user of the telephony device can select to generate the user message,

wherein the enabling selective entry includes selecting between recording one or more parameters insertable in a customized pre-recorded message and recording a message without

parameters while the incoming call is pending,
wherein the receiving includes recognizing at least one spoken command, and
wherein the at least one spoken command includes a predetermined instruction and a
variable parameter.